

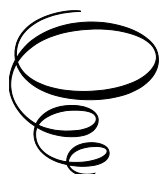
Insights into Portuguese Medical History:

*From the Birth of the Art
of Asclepius*

Edited by

Maria do Sameiro Barroso,
Christopher John Duffin
and João Alcindo Martins e Silva

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Insights into Portuguese Medical History:
From the Birth of the Art of Asclepius

Edited by Maria do Sameiro Barroso, Christopher John Duffin
and João Alcindo Martins e Silva

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2022 by Maria do Sameiro Barroso, Christopher John Duffin,
João Alcindo Martins e Silva and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without
the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8831-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8831-8

NOTA PRÉVIA: Por acordo com o editor, não se apresenta o texto na sua totalidade, apenas a síntese, excertos e bibliografia citada. - J. d'E.

CHAPTER 1

SALUS IN WEST ROMAN LUSITANIA

JOSE D'ENCARNAÇÃO

Abstract

After a general consideration of the concept of *Salus*, in its sense of physical and mental health (also meaning well-being and prosperity), I analyzed 15 Roman epigraphic documents containing the term. The informative content of each is synthesized to fit the word context. A shrine expressly offered to goddess *Salus* and other deities, conveying requests or thanksgiving, expresses this potentiality of divine spirits, regardless of specific characteristics, also benefiting from their great capacity to protect men in all aspects of their existence. Besides mentioning divinity, the epigraphic texts indicate the dedicator and the reason to have an inscription recorded. It is concluded that the (physical or spiritual) health concern covers all sectors of a population with no distinctions of gender or social class: men, women, slaves, and senators. On the other hand, it turns out that not only the goddess *Salus* is invoked since requests are also made to other Roman and even *indigenous deities*. The testimonies were found in urban and rural settings, although an expected urban political connotation is manifested.¹

Key words: *Salus*, *pro salute*, Roman Lusitania.

¹ List of Text Abbreviations

CIL II = HÜBNER (Emilio), *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum – II*. Berlin: Berlin Academy of Sciences, 1869 e 1892.

HEP = Hispania Epigraphica, edited by Universidade Complutense de Madrid. Indica-se, geralmente, o número, a data da publicação e o número da inscrição.

HEPOL = online version of *Hispania Epigraphica*, edited by Universidade Complutense de Madrid, available at <http://eda-bea.es/>

IRCP = Encarnação, José d', *Inscrições Romanas do Conventus Pacensis*, Coimbra, 2013 [<http://hdl.handle.net/10316/578>]. [The number indicates the inscription number on the catalogue].

Resumo

Após uma consideração geral acerca do conceito de *Salus*, na sua acepção de saúde física e mental (bem-estar, prosperidade), analisam-se 15 documentos epigráficos romanos em que surge a palavra *Salus*. Sintetiza-se o conteúdo informativo de cada um, para se enquadrar o contexto em que o vocábulo surge: há o altar expressamente oferecido à deusa *Salus* e há os que veiculam pedidos ou acção de graças a outras divindades, o que prova essa virtualidade dos númenes de, independentemente de características específicas, usufruírem também dessa enorme capacidade de protegerem o Homem em todos os aspectos da sua existência. Os textos epigráficos – na medida em que, além da menção da divindade, indicam quem foi o dedicante e a razão por que teve a iniciativa de mandar gravar uma inscrição – permitiram concluir que essa preocupação pela saúde (física ou espiritual) abrange todos os sectores da uma população, sem distinções de género ou de classe social: homens, mulheres, escravos, senadores... Por outro lado, verifica-se que não apenas a deusa *Salus* é invocada, porque os pedidos são feitos também a outras divindades romanas e, até, a divindades indígenas. Além disso, os testemunhos encontram-se tanto em ambiente urbano como em ambiente rural, embora se adivinhe para o urbano uma sintomática conotação política...

Palavras-chave: *Salus, pro salute*, Lusitânia romana.

Introduction

When visiting the cathedral of Sienna on May 10, 1991, I was impressed by a pile of motorcycle helmets by the side of a chapel. The name of the patron saint - perhaps Saint Rafael – was thereby honoured by those who miraculously escaped and recovered from a severe accident.

The statue of Dr Sousa Martins (1843-1879), an outstanding medical doctor and thaumaturge at Campo dos Mártires da Pátria, in Lisbon, with its base overflowing with expressions of thanks for favours granted (naturally in the medicinal domain), also impressed me profoundly. Likewise, dozens of chapels in Portugal are filled with wax votive reproductions of human organs, indicating that, at that place, someone made a promise and received grace during a bout of serious illness. Ex-votos were also expressed in naive tables of miracles in which people resorted to charismatic temples in suffering or healing events, recounted by words and matching designs (on this subject, see Ribeiro et al. 1998).

Religion lies at the connection between the human and the divine, in the spiritual realm, whether we believe or not in the existence of another dimension. It would be challenging to penetrate people's "arcana" if these

external signs as testimonies to people's experiences did not come to us. As a result, through the analysis of inscriptions that have come down to our time, perspectives will be rehearsed to understand better the role of *Salus* in the daily lives of those living two thousand years ago in the territory of western Roman Lusitania.

Firstly, I will consider the concept of *Salus* in a list of inscriptions selected as sources of information for this essay, ultimately trying to assess the meaning of these perspectives.

Salus

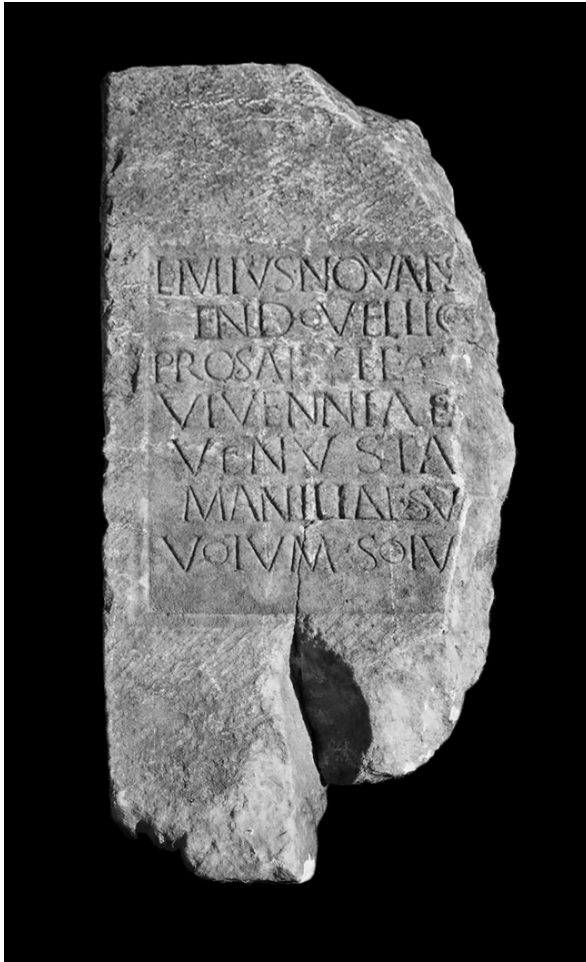
Joseph-Antoine Hild (1845-1914) was responsible for preparing an article on *Salus* for the classic *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines* (Hild in Daremberg & Salio 1969, 1056-1059). He begins by saying that, as with other "personified influences" in general, *Salus* has no relation to the health of an individual: its role assumes a predominantly political-social nature, promoting state welfare in peace and war.

It was common to believe that the State could only be "healthy" if the people were also healthy. As Hild warns, *Salus* could stand as equivalent to *Fortuna* (the goddess and personification of good luck) in her primary meaning, her invocation being reserved for critical life circumstances. Hence, in Portuguese, the Latin word *Salus* may have a double meaning, concerning both health and salvation! Holding drinking glasses, we toast "To our health!"; more informally, we exclaim "Let there be health!". Moreover, in the latter case, we end up including both people and organizations (state, government), promoting general and individual health.

Concerning the intimate nature of the Roman *Salus*, the Portuguese classicist Maria Helena da Rocha Pereira (1925-2017) notes that the Roman religion was "particularly fit to welcome personified abstractions among its gods" such as *Salus*. Moreover, she mentions the famous explanation of Cicero (106-43 BCE):

Again, there are the temples of Wealth, Safety, Concord, Liberty and Victory, all of which things, being so powerful as necessarily to imply divine governance, were themselves designated as gods. (Cicero, On the Nature of Gods, Book II, Chapter 23, Paragraph 61, translated by Rackham 1933, 183).

She also cites a confirmatory sentence by the classical philologist Viktor Pöschl (1910-1997):



*Fig. 1.1 Fragmented votive shrine to Endovellicus (IRCP 508).
Reproduced with permission.*

Because of the Nymphs' dedication, one might postulate, for example, the proximity of a watercourse or thermal spring dedicated to protective divinities. Therefore, the therapeutic qualities of the waters could be accessed, whether by being consumed as drinks or appropriated as thermal baths. Today, only Cabeço de Vide's pristine thermal baths near Monforte are extant.

The ex-voto to Victoria (No. 3), made for the health of the dedicator himself, suggests a military environment. Victory will certainly help against diseases; however, good physical condition was essential to obtain it. And it was nearby that a campus – possibly military – was consecrated to the emperor’s health! (nº 1).



Fig. 1.4. Monuments' locations. Map by José Luís Madeira. Reproduced with permission.

From that same area around *civitas Igaeditanorum*, came title 11, to be placed in a sanctuary (of an indigenous deity?) for a family member's health. Note, again, the symptomatic presence of the possessive *suus*.

Of course, Endovelicus, an indigenous divinity, was also called to intervene on behalf of his Manilia (n° 5). The tenderness (marital?) keeps good credentials.

The inscriptions cover an entire population without social distinction - men, women, senators and slaves; both Roman and indigenous deities were appealed to in both urban and rural environments, with political connotations indicating the former (Fig. 1.4).

Conclusion

In early 2021, the world faced a physical health crisis: the deleterious consequences on the human body of the infection caused by the pandemic virus. Attention has also been paid – and with even greater concern, perhaps – to the severe consequences on mental health. This means that we face the concept of *Salus*, health, in its dual meaning – and who should decide which of the meanings is the fundamental one!

We were aware of both concepts as we worked through the inscription catalogue relating to the concept of *Salus* in this western territory of Lusitania: personal, physical health, and health synonymous with well-being and prosperity. When approaching these epigraphic monuments, it seemed that they were addressing situations where physical health was being threatened. Deeper analysis, however, revealed prominent spiritual or psychological dimensions were rather more numerous.

We should conclude that, like in Roman times, in his profound being, the perennity of Man, depending on a greater Force, goes over and over, along with feelings of helplessness, facing invisible forces difficult to overcome, because they are so often wrapped in the fog of mystery...

Acknowledgement

The author is very grateful to Dr Maria do Sameiro Barroso for kindly translating the original Portuguese manuscript into English.

References

- Canto, Alicia Maria. 2004. “Los viajes del caballero inglés John Breval a España y Portugal: novedades arqueológicas y epigráficas de 1726”, *Revista Portuguesa de Arqueologia*, 7 (2): 265-364.
- Cicero, Marcus Tullius. 1933. *De natura deorum*. Rackham, Heinemann, William (ed), Rackham, Harris (English translation). London: Harvard University Press.
- Curado, Fernando Patrício. 1979. "Epigrafia das Beiras". *Conimbriga*, 18: 145-148.
- Darenberg, Charles & Saglio, Edmond. 1969. *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines*. Graz: Akademische Druck-u-Verlagsanstalt.
- Diogo, António Manuel Dias & Neto, José Luís. 2000. “Árula votiva de Vale do Souto, Oleiros”. *Ficheiro Epigráfico* 63 2000 inscrição nº 285.
- Encarnação, José d' & Gonçalves, Maria José. 2013. “Cilpes / CILPIS / Xilb / Silves? – Para uma discussão antiga um novo contributo. A inscrição de Silves evocativa do templo de Neptuno”. *Espacio Tiempo y Forma* série II (História Antigua), 26: 255-276.
<http://hdl.handle.net/10316/25153>
- Garcia, José Manuel. 1984. *Epigrafia Lusitano-Romana do Museu Tavares Proença Júnior*. Castelo Branco: Museu de Tavares Proença Júnior.
- González, Julián & Arce Javier (eds). 1988. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. Centro de Estudios Historicos. 1
- Pereira, Maria Helena da Rocha. 2002. *Estudos de História da Cultura Clássica – II volume – Cultura Romana*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- Ribeiro, Agostinho, Correia, Alberto & Borges, Dulce Helena Pires [eds], 1998. *Do Gesto à Memória – Ex-votos*. Lisboa: Instituto Português de Museus.
- Ribeiro, José Cardim. 2019. *Escrever sobre a margem do Oceanus: epigrafia e religio no Santuário do Sol Poente (Provincia Lusitania)*. (Sylloge Epigraphica Barcinonensis, Annexos III). Barcelona: Galerada.